

(August 21, 2008) Lipinski: CN Rail Purchase Is Good For the Region

[North Riverside, IL] Congressman Dan Lipinski (IL-3) today announced his support for the Canadian National (CN) Rail purchase of the Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern (EJ&E) Railway. Lipinski is the only northern Illinois member who serves on the powerful House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee that oversees the Surface Transportation Board (STB). He was joined by Mayor Richard Scheck of North Riverside, President Jack Wiaduck of Riverside, and other local officials and residents at today's announcement.

"After careful consideration of the facts, including the STB's draft EIS (Environmental Impact Statement), I have concluded that this transaction will be good for the region," said Lipinski. "Overall, it will improve the quality of life for area residents and contribute to local economic growth. In addition, it will be good for the national economy."

"Chicagoland is the rail hub of the nation, and it is also a terrible rail bottleneck," concluded Lipinski. "This is a national problem because it takes 2 days just to get a train through Chicago. But it is also a local problem because it means idling trains, blocked crossings, and train whistles at all times of the day. My constituents and many other residents in countless communities all throughout Chicagoland have had to live with these issues for a long time. This purchase can help change that."

Based on data filed with the STB, more than 60 municipalities will see a reduction in train traffic with this deal, including many in Congressman Lipinski's congressional district. The STB has found with an independent analysis that the future traffic estimates are reasonable.

Some of the estimates for Third District communities include:

- Archer Heights - 8 fewer CN trains per day
- Beverly - 3 fewer CN trains per day
- Bridgeport - 4 fewer CN trains per day
- Bridgeview - 8 fewer CN trains per day
- Chicago Ridge - 17 fewer CN trains per day
- Garfield Ridge - 24 fewer CN trains per day
- LaGrange - 9 fewer CN trains per day
- LaGrange Park - 9 fewer CN trains per day
- Mount Greenwood - 3 fewer CN trains per day
- Oak Lawn - 8 fewer CN trains per day
- Summit - 21 fewer CN trains per day

"I strongly believe that it is critical to evaluate this acquisition from a balanced regional perspective," explained Lipinski. "It is important to look at the areas that will benefit. From Bridgeport to Bridgeview, from Oak Lawn to Beverly and Mount Greenwood, from Archer Heights to LaGrange Park, and from Chicago Ridge to Garfield Ridge - these communities and many others will benefit. Fewer CN freight trains will be running through many other communities throughout this region, such as Harvey, Bellwood, Posen, Schiller Park, South Holland, Franklin Park, and Lansing."

On October 30, 2007, CN filed an application with the STB to acquire the EJ&E. In July 2008, the STB released its draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), a document 9 inches thick with 5 volumes and 9 chapters. The EIS found that current Metra operations and Amtrak operations would not be affected. It also found that Metra's proposed STAR line and Southeast Service projects would not be adversely affected either.

"The STB's draft EIS provides answers to many of my initial questions when the proposal was announced," said Lipinski.

"This will not hurt current Metra and Amtrak operations or the Metra STAR line or Southeast Service projects, and it will help reduce train traffic in over 60 communities. In the communities where train traffic will increase, I believe that those impacts should be mitigated to the fullest extent possible and in a reasonable fashion. On balance, this is a good deal for the region and the nation."

Transportation experts from the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development at DePaul University and the Metropolitan Transportation Support Initiative at the University of Illinois at Chicago have expressed support for the CN acquisition of the EJ&E and noted its benefits to the entire region.